



STATE SENATOR  
**CHARLETA B. TAVARES**

15<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT

**Sponsor Testimony**  
**Presented by: Senator Charleta B. Tavares**  
**Senate Bill 270**  
**Finance Committee**  
**Chair, Senator Scott Oelslager**  
**Tuesday, December 4, 2018**

Good afternoon, Chairman Oelslager and members of the Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present on Senate Bill 270, which requires all entities that employ or supervise individuals who work on Capitol Square to have a sexual harassment policy on file and to undergo annual sexual harassment training. This includes: House, Senate, CSRAB, State Highway Troopers, and Legislative agents or employers of legislative agents.

Within the past two years, a national movement has sparked the exposure of sexual harassment occurring in the entertainment industry

and within state legislative institutions nationwide. Ohio, along with several other states, has reported cases of sexual harassment and misconduct.

Senate Bill 270 seeks to strengthen the current sexual harassment policies on file within the Ohio legislature and Capitol Square. Our current training helps us identify and report sexual harassment, but it does not go far enough to help us reduce occurrences and change the culture.

In 2016, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (“EEOC”) conducted a task force study on harassment in the workplace and found that, while trainings may help participants understand what constitutes workplace harassment, there’s no good evidence that trainings change attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. The report also outlined risk factors for workplaces that may be more susceptible to sexual harassment, and sadly, Capitol Square meets several of those risk factors (i.e. young workers, the importance of appearances to the public, power disparities, etc.).

SB 270 seeks to address these concerns by implementing the General Assembly Sexual Harassment Taskforce and creating a more robust and in depth training protocol with clearer reporting mechanisms. In the long run, the task force will help us to change the culture of Capitol Square through its ongoing review of current policies and its administration of an annual survey with the purpose of monitoring employees' experiences on Capitol Square.

Under SB 270, sexual harassment policies are to be public, kept on file by members and staff, and reviewed every two years for all entities or individuals who work on Capitol Square and within the Statehouse. The legislation also creates an exemption from public records law for materials related to a complaint while the investigation is occurring. The identity of the complainant is permanently exempt from public record disclosure. Women in the workforce are often afraid of retaliation, reputational harm, and being blacklisted from future employment, which makes this exemption crucial to the protection of the victim.

If we want to end harassment, we must work to close gaps in gender equality, increase the number of women in the legislature and in leadership roles, and continue to convey that we have zero tolerance for harassment in our legislature.

Senate Bill 270 is the first step towards achieving this goal and resolving the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace at the Ohio Legislature.

Chairman Oelslager and members of the Committee, I appreciate your attention to this important issue and I respectfully request your favorable consideration and passage of Senate Bill 270. Thank you and I am happy to respond to questions from the Committee.